



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 20 – 26 Jun 2011



20 June 1941 **The War Department established the Army Air Forces** under Maj. Gen. Henry H. Arnold. It encompassed both the Office of the Chief of the Air Corps under Maj. Gen. George Brett, who was responsible for research, development, supply, and maintenance, and Air Force Combat Command (formerly General Headquarters Air Force) under Lt. Gen. Delos C. Emmons, who was responsible for doctrine and operational training.

21 June 1944 **Operation FRANTIC** was a plan for American bombers launching from the Mediterranean or England to strike Germany and then shuttle on to bases in the Soviet Union. The concept would allow American bombers to reach targets deeper in Germany, divert *Luftwaffe* air support away from western approaches, and provide additional cover for battles on the eastern front. American strategists also hoped that the operation would forge closer ties with the USSR and encourage Stalin to allow access to Siberian air bases for use against Japan. After some successful missions out of Italy, an England-based B-17 force raided synthetic fuel plants near Berlin on 21 June. However, a Luftwaffe He-111 bomber shadowed the B-17s to their Russian base. At midnight that night, the Luftwaffe sent well over 100 bombers to drop flares and attack the B-17s, destroying or damaging about 70 American bombers. Soviet air defenses did very little to oppose the raid, and Operation Frantic ended.



Russian military personnel in front of a damaged B-17 at Poltava, Russia (22 Jun 1944)



Two Russian pilots flank a US maintenance officer in front of a Soviet P-39



C-47s unloading at Templehoff Airport

26 June 1948 **Berlin Airlift.** The USAF launched “Operation Vittles” in response to a June 24 Soviet blockade of rail and road lines into West Berlin. C-47 and C-54 aircraft and personnel of the Pacific Division, Military Air Transport Service (MATS), deployed from Hickam to Germany in support of Operation Vittles, which delivered 2.3 million tons of cargo to West Berlin between June 1948 and July 1949. This airlift delivered enough coal and food to sustain the city indefinitely and became the largest humanitarian airlift in history.

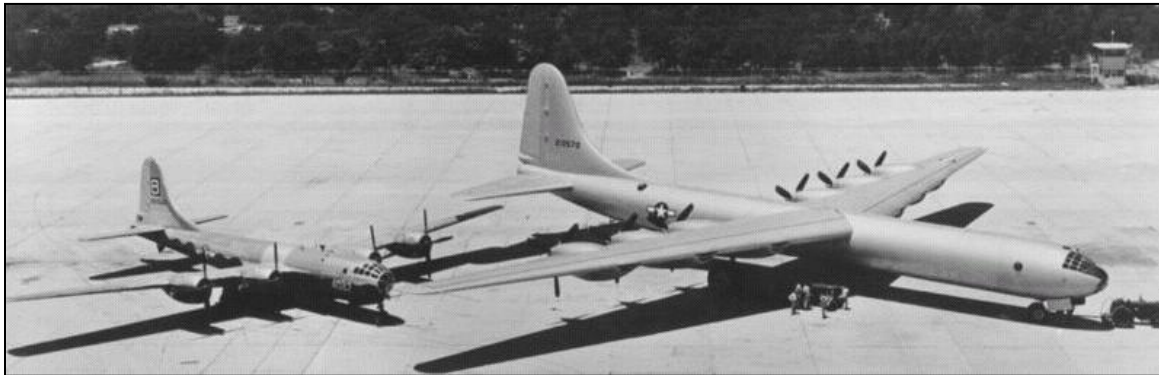


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26 June 1948 The 7th Bomb Group received the USAF's first operational **B-36 Peacemaker** heavy bomber. With a length of 160 feet and wings spanning 230 feet, the Peacemaker was the world's largest warplane and is still the largest bomber ever built. The huge six-engine bomber was designed in 1941 when it appeared England might fall to Germany and the U.S. would need a trans-Atlantic bomber in a war against the Nazis. (Photo below is an early B-36 next to a B-29. Four jet engines were eventually added to the B-36 design to improve performance.)



25 June 1950 **The Korean War.** At 0400 hours, North Korea launched a sudden, all-out attack against the Republic of Korea. A Hickam-based MATS C-54G parked at Kimpo Airport (just



An F-80 attacks invading
North Korean forces

west of Seoul) was destroyed by North Korean fighters and was the first American aircraft lost in the Korean conflict. The UN Security Council passed a resolution calling for the withdrawal of North Korean forces from South Korea, and Fifth Air Force prepared to airlift U.S. citizens out of Seoul, the South Korean capital. C-54, C-47, and C-46 transport aircraft from the 374th Troop Carrier Wing and Headquarters Far East Air Forces began airlifting hundreds of evacuees from Seoul and Suwon Airfields to Japan. They were escorted by F-82s, F-80 jet

fighters, and B-26 light bombers. On the same day, an F-82 Twin Mustang pilot, 1st Lt. William G. Hudson, earned the first aerial victory credit of the Korean War when he shot down a North Korean Yak-11 that was attacking a South Korean airfield near Seoul. Five other USAF pilots also shot down enemy airplanes.

23-24 June 1952 Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps aircraft in coordinated attacks virtually destroyed all the **hydroelectric power plants of North Korea**. The two-day operation, involving over 1,200 sorties, was the largest single air effort since World War II. (At right, the bombing of a DPRK dam during the Korean War.)





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26 June 1972 **The Air Force unveiled the F-15 air superiority fighter** in ceremonies at the McDonnell Douglas facility in St. Louis. Arguably the world's most successful fighter program, the F-15 has excellent radar and supporting avionics, a very reliable airframe and superb maneuverability. The F-15 may have been the first aircraft with “hands-on-throttle-and-stick”



(HOTAS), a human-machine interface concept which puts key controls on the throttle and control stick and thus immediately accessible to the pilots' fingers. The combination of HOTAS and heads-up display (HUD) allows the pilot to focus outside the cockpit while operating weapons and other systems. At left, an F-15 intercepts a Russian Tu-95 bomber near Alaska.

20 June 1976 **Final U.S. Base Closures in Thailand.** The last two U.S. facilities in Thailand, U Tapao Royal Thai Naval Air Field and the Ramasun electronic monitoring facility, closed. The last scheduled C-130 service from U Tapao departed on 19 June. At U Tapao, facilities valued at an estimated \$102.2 million were given to the Thais. After nearly 26 years, the U.S. Military Assistance Command Thailand also ceased to exist.

25 June 1996 **Khobar Towers.** Terrorists detonated a truck bomb outside the fence surrounding a housing facility near King Abdul-Aziz Air Base, Saudi Arabia. The blast killed 19 Air Force personnel and injured 300 others.

Force protection measures at the facility were primarily concerned that terrorist bombers might penetrate the building, as happened at the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983. Concrete barriers surrounded the fence around the Khobar Towers, but there were few lights. No surveillance cameras, sensors, or alarms were in use. USAF Security Police overlooking the perimeter from the roof saw the truck being parked and alerted many occupants to the threat. However, the evacuation was still in progress when the bomb detonated. The perpetrators escaped. (The photo shows the bomb crater and the damage to the housing facility.)

As a result of the bombing, most USAF personnel in Saudi Arabia were moved to remote sites that were easier to defend.

